

Star Crossed by the_zesty_lemon

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Summary:

He'd been called every name in the book: No-Leaf Clover, Black Cat, Captain Catastrophe, Star Crossed (he had Grandma Wheeler to thank for that outdated term).

His inexplicable bad luck was something that Mike desperately hoped he'd grow out of.

He hadn't of course.

Modern Day AU / No Powers

1. Mike Drops the Ball (Cake)

Mike Wheeler maneuvered carefully through the bustling crowd on the campus sidewalk, a cake box nestled in his arms. It was busier than expected for a Saturday, but he knew he'd be clear of the crowd soon. His feet carried him automatically towards his dorm—it was only a couple of minutes from the bus stop and then he was home free.

He spared a glance at his watch: 2:15PM. Perfect!

Running ahead of schedule and disaster free for once was a new thing for Mike Wheeler. The bakery had been right on time for pickup; the pristine looking cake practically gleaming. Now all he had to do was grab his suit from his dorm and take the cake to the venue for his sister Nancy's 27th birthday party and everything would be *perfect*.

He couldn't help the small, triumphant spark that welled in his chest. Mike, like every one of his friends, expected something to go wrong today. When Mike "Bad Luck" Wheeler had a hand in anything, *everything* that could go wrong *did*.

He'd been called every name in the book:

No-Leaf Clover.

Black Cat.

Captain Catastrophe.

Star Crossed (he had Grandma Wheeler to thank for that outdated term).

If you looked up the definition of 'Bad Luck' in the dictionary, you could probably find Mike's name in the footnotes. He had one year, found his name and picture in the dictionary thanks to his friends' April Fool's Day prank.

From the time he was in kindergarten, a shroud of bad luck clung to him much like a curse. Every time his friends pulled straws, who got the short one? Who tripped at their middle school graduation and

took down the entire sparkly backdrop that the decorating committee had spent weeks decorating? And of course had the same thing happen at high school graduation years later?

It was strictly bad luck that the same girl (Jennifer Hayes) was in charge of the decorating committee on both occasions and watched with absolute horror as Mike Wheeler once again took out the project she and the committee had poured their blood, sweat and souls into.

Even the bullies didn't bother with him after a while. They were too concerned that his bad luck would rub off on them if they came into contact too often (like he was some kind of poison dart frog). Of course this was total bullshit, because his best friends, Lucas Sinclair, Dustin Henderson and Will Byers never seemed to be on the brunt of any misfortune. Mostly because Mike, the lightning rod for all that was disastrous and ill fated was there to absorb it for them.

It was a trait everyone said he'd grow out of.

He hadn't of course.

Just as the triumphant feeling began to grow in his chest and Mike was thanking whatever god of luck had *finally* smiled upon him, disaster struck.

He was too busy congratulating himself to notice the slight dip in the sidewalk and his foot caught.

Mike stumbled.

His arms flailed and suddenly everything moved in slow motion: the cake box soared high into the air and came down, landing with a great, big *SPLAT* in the middle of the sidewalk.

He stared in a stunned, horrified silence at the once perfect five layer buttercream custom masterpiece... smooshed across the campus sidewalk much like all of his hopes and dreams that today would go smoothly.

Jonathan asked him to do *one* thing. ONE THING. It wasn't even that big of a thing!

“Can you pick up the cake at two Mike? Here’s the card.” Jonathan had asked him with such hope that of course Mike agreed. Especially because of all Nancy’s birthdays, this one was supposed to be perfect because Jonathan was planning to propose.

He groaned and dropped his head into his hands, mind racing a mile a minute.

What can I do? Go back to the bakery? Just as soon as he thought of it, Mike dismissed the idea. The bakery Jonathan ordered the cake from was *extremely popular*. His future brother-in-law called months in advance for this cake. There was no way they could whip one up again in just a few hours.

For the briefest moment Mike debated calling Jonathan, but his future brother-in-law was swamped with getting everything ready for the party. Even Mike’s normal backup (Will, Dustin and Lucas) were busy helping with the set up—he was on his own for this one.

Mike tried not to despair as students pushed by him, parting around the cake on the sidewalk and continuing on without a second glance. As if to add insult to injury, several pigeons had zeroed in on the free meal and were currently chowing down.

At least someone gets to enjoy Nancy’s cake. He thought glumly.

“Oh no, what a waste of a good looking cake.” The voice took him by surprise, but the tone was not mocking.

“It was for my sister’s birthday.” Mike sighed. “It even had her favourite buttercream icing.” He turned to face the person who stopped to talk to him and promptly forgot how to breathe.

Wow. Dark, whiskey brown eyes met his and Mike’s heart sputtered to a stop and then restarted. She was beautiful in a soft, rosy kind of way with touchable looking dark curls and sun kissed cheeks. His gaze swept across the smattering of freckles on the bridge of her nose and he wondered if she had freckles year round like him, or if the sun coaxed them out.

“Was it a special birthday?”

Mike flushed in embarrassment. He'd been staring at this beautiful woman like a total dork! Either she didn't notice, or ignored his social gaff, which he was grateful for.

"Yeah. Her boyfriend is going to propose tonight. It was supposed to be perfect but... unfortunately I was in charge of the cake." They both glanced down to the disgusting mess on the sidewalk.

There was no use crying over spilt milk. This would just go down as another chapter in the *Mike 'Bad Luck' Wheeler ruins everything Chronicles*. It wasn't the first cake that had come to a rather unfortunate end under his watch (and unbeknownst to Mike at that moment, it wouldn't be the last).

"So what are you going to do now?" The stranger asked curiously.

It was a good question. What *was* he going to do?

"I guess... grocery store?" Mike cringed. So did the stranger.

Grocery store cakes were dry and sickly sweet. He didn't think Nancy would actually mind, but he didn't want to let Jonathan down.

"I could try the bakery. Maybe they'll have enough time." Mike sighed skeptically. It was a long shot, but what else could he do?

"Why don't you bake one yourself?" The stranger suggested.

"I've never been very good at baking." Mike said, thinking back to past attempts. Somehow he always managed to screw up the recipe.

Cooking? No problem. Baking? Disaster.

"I could help you." The offer is so unexpected that Mike wondered if he heard wrong.

"What?" He asked dumbly.

"I could help you bake the cake for your sister's birthday. Baking is a hobby of mine and my dorm is just around corner." The beautiful stranger squinted at Mike. "Also, I'm pretty sure you're in my Bio four thousand class with Professor Clarke... aren't you?"

Mike's jaw dropped. How did she know that?

"I have his eight AM class too." She said with a wry smile that did something funny to his insides. "I sit towards the middle so I have a pretty good view of everyone coming in, don't worry, I'm not a stalker." He flushed. She'd read his panicked thoughts so easily!

"So what do you say? I don't mind helping." She offered kindly.

Mike couldn't believe it. This kind, (almost) stranger offering to help him bake a cake? Did he really hear her right? She peered at him expectantly, no trace of unkindness or untruth in her features.

Go home... and bake a cake with a stranger from class? Wasn't this how people got murdered in horror movies? Mike frowned. If that were the case, it would be the strangest horror movie plot ever. But what better choice was there, really?

He couldn't believe he was considering the offer, but... staring down at the ruined cake that was now teeming with an alarming amount of pigeons, Mike knew the answer.

"Are you sure?" He blurted out finally, fully expecting her to rescind the offer of help and run off laughing into the sunset.

"What time is your sister's party?"

"Seven." He supplied quickly.

"I don't think we'll be able to bake as big of a cake because my oven isn't that large... but we could make a three layer one I think? It won't look as professional but it'll be a lot better than a grocery store cake." She explained, her brow furrowing in thought.

Mike nearly kissed her right then and there—and he didn't even know her name!

"You have no idea what this means to me." He gushed sincerely. "I'll replace your ingredients after. I promise."

"It's no problem. We should get going right away. Oh!" She turned to him, startled. "I forgot to introduce myself. I'm Jane. But you can call

me El.” He wasn’t entirely sure how you got the nickname “El” out of Jane, but Mike wasn’t going to dwell on it too long because this stunningly kind, wonderful woman was about to save his sorry skin. She could have called herself the “Overlord of Darkness and all that is Evil” and Mike wouldn’t care as long as she helped him bake the cake.

“Mike.” He held out his hand.

Their fingers brushed and a tiny spark shimmered through his fingertips, her hand fit so *perfectly* in his.

“Let’s go bake a cake.” El prompted, releasing his hand almost reluctantly. Mike nodded dazedly and followed this not quite complete stranger towards her dorm.

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Sure enough, El’s dorm was just around the corner. It was one of the older dorm buildings on campus and though it was aged, it had been well kept. She buzzed the door open and led him in to the building. They trudged up four flights of stairs and came to a stop in front of apartment 353.

Am I actually doing this? Mike wondered for the tenth time. Was he actually following a complete stranger to her dorm because she’d offered to bake a cake with him? To save him from letting down his future brother in law?

Yes. Absolutely.

“Sorry for the mess. It’s my first day off in a while and that was one of my missions.” El apologized sheepishly, fishing her apartment keys from her pocket.

“I’m the one who should apologize.” Mike insisted immediately, “I’m bothering you on your day off to bake a cake with a complete stranger.”

“Almost complete stranger.” El corrected teasingly, “we have bio four thousand together. And it’s not a problem.” She laughed before pushing the door open. He was momentarily stunned by the sweet sound of her laugh and followed after her dazedly.

The dorm was just as dated as the exterior, but it was warm and cozy. El was lucky enough to score a single dorm; it even had a tiny kitchen! He and Lucas shared a tiny apartment in a newer building on campus.

Small, homey touches decorated the modest dorm: a fuzzy blanket thrown over the armchair, a few framed photos hanging on the wall above the small couch, a pair of fuzzy bunny slippers left by the coffee table... It was nice.

El tossed her keys into a bowl on the shelf beside the door in a very practiced motion. She shrugged her backpack off and dropped it on the floor before kicking off her shoes. In one fluid motion, she swooped into the small living room and snagged the dirty breakfast dishes from the coffee table and headed towards the kitchenette.

“Would you mind shutting the door please?” She called.

“Sure.” Mike closed the door gently before following her lead and kicking off his shoes. He placed them neatly to the side of the doorway and headed further into the apartment.

“Here you are.” El popped out of the kitchen and offered a frilly, pink apron out to him. She wore a matching canary yellow one.

“Thank you.” He said politely, shyness creeping up his spine now that it was just the two of them in the apartment.

“Where do we start?” He asked, donning the apron and rolling up his sleeves.

“Are you good with a white cake?” El called over her shoulder, pulling a pair of measuring cups and spoons from the cupboard.

“That’s great.” Mike said sincerely. She nodded and turned to a different cupboard and rummaged around. After a moment she produced a worn cookbook with a small noise of triumph.

“We’ll start with wet ingredients first.” El turned back around and continued gathering the materials. Mike hovered awkwardly at the edge of the kitchen, unsure of what to do.

El seemed to catch on to his awkwardness.

“Go ahead and wash your hands first. Then we’ll start measuring.”

Mike nodded and moved to follow instructions. They fell into a working silence, the only talk came from El giving directions. It was comfortable, despite being almost strangers who had officially only met about a half hour ago.

Mostly, Mike kept reminding himself not to sneak looks at El, which was a lot harder than it sounded. She was *stunning*. How had he never noticed her in class before?

Well... he knew how. As much as he loved the sciences, Mike despised early morning classes. He was like a freaking zombie! El could have come up and slapped him across the face in their shared 8AM class and he probably wouldn’t have noticed.

But he noticed her now. His traitorous heart beat suspiciously fast in his chest every time those dark eyes glanced his way.

“So... El.” Mike began, desperately trying to distract himself.

“Yes?” She asked with a curious upturn to the corner of her lips. El looked like one of those chefs on TV the way she casually leaned against the counter, whisking the eggs like she’d been doing it all her life.

“That’s an interesting nickname from Jane.” He finished lamely.

Dammit. He was such a dweeb! Mike never knew what to say. Why didn’t he ask her something normal? Like hey, how do you like Mr. Clarke’s class? But it was too late, the question was out.

“Yeah,” she laughed, “it’s a little embarrassing actually.”

“Oh, sorry. You don’t have to—“

“No, it’s fine! It’s a good embarrassing.” El waved off his concern. “I got it from my sister. She used to call me Loser—in an endearing way, don’t worry.” She added hastily.

“Our dad used to get mad at her for calling me that, so instead she started calling me ‘L’ as a joke.” El flashed the ‘loser’ sign with her fingers and grinned. “It stuck and I liked having a nickname so it turned into El. Like E.L.”

Mike chuckled. That definitely sounded like something an older sibling would do.

“What about you Mike? Any embarrassing nicknames hiding away?” She teased lightly. He tried to ignore the fluttering nerves in his stomach.

“Er...” He wracked his brain, “kind of. Mostly just bad jokes about me secretly being a black cat. Or jinxed. Or cursed by a witch.” El stopped whisking, a puzzled look on her face.

“Because I have *really* bad luck.” Mike added belatedly, realizing he hadn’t explained himself very well.

“Oh!” El began to whisk again. “Is that what happened this afternoon?”

Mike cringed and nodded. She looked thoughtful for a second as she added some ingredients to the bowl on the counter.

“Maybe you just need a lucky charm.” She suggested.

“One of my best friends gives me a rabbit’s foot every year for my birthday.” Mike admitted, thinking of Dustin. El laughed.

“Have you considered trying a four leaf clover instead?” She suggested.

Mike’s lips twitched. “With my luck I’d be allergic.”

They both chuckled. Some of the awkwardness of their strange situation melted away and Mike relaxed.

“So, what’s your major?” He asked conversationally, patting himself mentally on the back for being able to ask a normal question this time.

They worked hard as they talked.

It turns out El was a fourth year biology major with a minor in chemistry. Mike was also a fourth year, but he was a computer science major with a minor in biology. They’d actually had a few classes together without realizing it. The university was very large, there were several hundred students in the classes and until now they hadn’t met each other.

Between chatting about school, El’s expert baking skills and Mike’s assistance, they finished the rest of the cake prep neatly.

The three cake pans barely fit into the oven, but once they were in the two of them peered into the oven window with a sense of accomplishment.

It was only just after 4 o’ clock—there was still plenty of time before the party. Mike wasn’t expected at the venue until six-thirty. Jonathan and the guys wanted to keep him (understandably) as far away from the main event prep just in case his token bad luck reared its ugly head. The joke was on all of them though, since his bad luck had appeared and swallowed the previous cake whole.

“We’ll check on them in thirty minutes or so.” El set the little egg-shaped egg timer on top of the counter beside the oven, nodding approvingly.

“So what do you do for fun?” She asked curiously, leaning against the counter.

“I’m a big fan of video and board games.” Mike admitted sheepishly, “have you ever heard of Dungeons and Dragons?” Whenever Mike mentioned Dungeons and Dragons, people rolled their eyes, or made a strange face.

El did neither.

“Dungeons and Dragons?” She repeated thoughtfully, “I played that

once. But I don't think we did it right because none of us played before and everyone was learning while trying to play and it was a disaster." Her lips twitched into a smile and Mike's heart thudded inexplicably in his chest.

"It gets better when you know what you're doing. It's really confusing at first but then you get into it and it's a lot of fun." He gushed happily. "My best friends and I play all the time."

"Maybe you could show me sometime then. We could go to a board game café." It was a simple, offhand remark, but it made his stomach seize in a spasm of nervous butterflies and his cheeks grow hot.

"Y-yeah! That would be great." Mike agreed.

What the hell, they were two almost-strangers making a cake together! Why not add a board game night sometime? It was already such a strange situation that Mike wondered if anything could faze him after this.

"What about you El, what do you do for fun?" He asked, desperately trying to ignore his suddenly sweaty palms.

"Well, baking for one." El said with a happy grin. "and board games are great. But..."

She flushed and glanced around as though fearing to be overheard.

"I love laser tag."

Mike feigned shock. "So you're a true nerd then. A biology major and you love laser tag."

El gasped and shot him a blatantly fake, betrayed look. "You're one to talk. Computer science? Please."

Mike snorted and opened his mouth to retort, but the shrill ring of the phone interrupted him. They both jumped at the sound before sharing an embarrassed laugh.

"We should start the icing soon. The icing sugar is in the cupboard to the left of the fridge, could you grab it? I'll just be a minute." El

directed apologetically, giving her hands a quick rinse and reaching for the dorm-issued phone on the counter.

In all the time Mike had lived on campus, he hadn't actually ever seen anyone use their dorm phone.

"Oh hey Max!" El greeted happily, tucking the phone under her chin and reaching for the cookbook at the same time.

Max? Mike's heart sank and he wasn't sure why.

He tried not to eavesdrop as he fished around in the cupboard for the icing sugar, but it was hard with their close proximity in the small kitchen. El giggled at something Max said on the phone and his heart sank a little more.

"I'm just baking a cake with Mike." El explained.

A beat of silence.

"Max!" She hissed into the phone suddenly.

He snuck a glance at El. Her cheeks were flushed pink—clearly Max said something to make her flustered. He found the icing sugar behind a set of rather large measuring cups and pulled it out.

"I bake with you all the time? Oh... I never thought to ask. Hold on." El covered the receiver with her hand and looked at Mike over her shoulder.

"Mike?" She called tentatively.

"Yes?" He asked curiously.

"You're not a serial killer, are you?"

A sound between a laugh and a snort erupted from him before he could stop it. El tried to hide the grin on her lips, but of course Mike saw it.

"No. Are you?" He finally managed to ask.

“No.” She said approvingly, turning back to her phone call without a second thought.

“I’ll call you later. We have to get this done in a jiff.” It was a rather abrupt end to the conversation a few moments later and Mike turned to study the cakes in the oven while she wrapped it up. There was another slight pause before:

“Of course you’re my date. I’ll pick you up at seven. Love you.” He could hear the smile in her voice as she hung up the phone.

Of course someone as awesome as El already had a boyfriend.

The disappointment sat in his stomach like a rock and Mike realized he was experiencing the aftermath of a short-lived crush. This was the first time he’d ever clicked so fast with... anyone! (His best friends didn’t count in this since they’d been friends since kindergarten).

And who was Mike kidding? Really? El had unintentionally stolen his heart the moment she suggested a Dungeons and Dragons board game night.

How lame am I? Mike groaned inwardly.

“Sorry about that,” El apologized, “now where were we?”

“Icing sugar.” Mike snapped himself out of his wallowing.

Sure, El might have a boyfriend, but there were far worse things than making a good friend. He would just have to hurry up and squash any notion of being attracted to El like *that*. It wasn’t good manners to pine after someone who was taken.

“Great! Buttercream is your sister’s favorite, right?”

Mike tried to ignore the flip of his heart. It was flattering she’d remembered.

“Right.” He agreed.

They had a job to do and not much more time to do it in. The two

students set to work once more.

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An hour and a half later, they were finished.

Mike could only watch in transfixed amazement, as El fell into autopilot the moment the timer dinged. She moved fluidly, checking the cakes with a toothpick, nodding to herself happily when they came out clean before smoothly sliding all three pans out onto the cooling racks. From there she finished making the icing and then began cutting the unevenness away from the cakes and fixed the layers so they were almost perfectly straight. The way she moved through the kitchen, so confident and effortless, reminded Mike much of a dancer who'd danced the same routine gracefully a thousand times over.

El then moved on to making the cake look pretty. Using the turntable she'd placed the layered pieces on, she smoothed the icing and then piped the delicate looking ruffle-like icing. She was about halfway through piping when she looked up, startled.

"I hope ruffles are okay!" El groaned, "I didn't even ask! I just started..."

"You're amazing." Mike blurted, wide eyed. "The ruffles are great."

El's cheeks darkened before she hastily turned back to her work with a pleased nod.

Mike could only stare in further amazement. Not only at her beautiful work, but at the look of deep concentration in her whiskey colored gaze. The sheer focus on her task and the quirks to her lips or brow made his heart melt in his chest.

She was stunning. And so was the cake.

It was pristine, standing in its three-layered glory on the counter. It

looked like something from the cover of a magazine with soft, white ruffled icing and gleaming golden sprinkles on top. On the top of the cake it read: *Happy Birthday*, in smooth, pink cursive letters.

Mike, for his contribution, cleaned up after El.

They bumped into each other in the small kitchen as they worked hurriedly, but neither minded. It was the least he could do to leave her with a clean kitchen after she'd been so kind to help him.

"We did it!" El exclaimed, surveying their handiwork with a satisfied look.

"We did." Mike agreed just as happily, glancing around the sparkling kitchen with a sense of pride. They shared a big, goofy grin before something occurred to him.

"Um... how should I transport it?"

"I think I have a spare cake box around here somewhere..." El rummaged around in a lower cupboard.

"Here we go!" She said triumphantly, holding up a flat, white cardboard box.

El quickly assembled the box and slid the cake into it. She taped the lid so it remained ajar, ensuring that the icing wouldn't be crushed.

Mike watched over her shoulder once more in fascination. How often did she do this? She made it look so simple and yet masterful. When El said she baked as a hobby—she really wasn't kidding!

"You have to hold it steady so it won't slide when you're carrying it." El turned around and bumped right into Mike's chest, surprising both of them. She hadn't realized how close he was behind her. Her eyes widened just a fraction and Mike found himself completely captivated. His heart hammered against his chest at the same moment his eyes flickered down to her soft, pink lips.

El leaned forwards, dazed. So did Mike.

Their lips were an inch apart when he caught himself.

El probably had a *boyfriend*! Holy shit what was he doing?

“I should probably head downstairs.” He blurted awkwardly, completely and utterly ruining the moment. It didn’t help that he jumped away like a startled cat.

El blinked confusedly at the sudden shift in mood and Mike swore he could see the same disappointment reflected in her eyes that swept through him.

She took a measured step back towards the counter, putting space between them.

“I’ll call a cab for you.” El agreed cheerily, turning around and picking up the phone without another word.

Mike tried to ignore the pang in his chest. He stayed quiet while she ordered the cab and hung up the phone. The disappointment was gone from her features when she turned around and Mike tried to act normally.

“I’ll help you downstairs. That way you don’t have to carry the cake on your own.” She offered.

He nearly slumped in relief. Once again El was well and truly saving his ass. Knowing his luck, he would have dropped the second cake down the stairs.

They slipped on their shoes before very *carefully* picking up the cake box between them.

“Thanks again for all your help.” Mike said as they maneuvered slowly down the narrow staircase.

“It was my pleasure.” El smiled, “you really livened up my Saturday.”

Mike flushed at her sincerity, wishing a little selfishly that she didn’t already have a boyfriend while simultaneously thinking him a lucky bastard. He was glad that their awkward moment seemed to have blown over between them.

They reached the downstairs lobby and headed out onto the front curb of the residence. Students gave them a curious look as they

passed by. They did make a rather strange appearance, holding the cake box between them, El wearing a frilly yellow apron; a smudge of flour across her forehead and Mike was... oops! He forgot to take the apron off.

Just as he realized he needed to give El her apron back, the honk of a horn alerted the two students of the cab's arrival. Neither of them wanted to say goodbye just yet. They lingered together, exchanging a shy smile over the box.

"I hope I'll get to see you again sometime for that board game night." El said hopefully.

"Definitely." Mike agreed happily. He made sure El had a good grip on the cake box before he let go and pulled the apron off.

He had a *really* good time this afternoon, baking with El and talking and just enjoying her company. Their meeting was by complete chance, but if Mike had to accidentally drop his sister's birthday cake to meet El—he'd do it all over again.

"Mike?" El gazed up at him, suddenly nervous and her cheeks pink. Her sudden nervousness made his palms sweat.

"Yeah El?" He asked.

"I was wondering if you'd want to—"

The honk of a horn startled both of them. Mike shot the taxi driver an unimpressed look.

"Sorry El. What were you going to say?" He asked distractedly.

"Never mind. You have to get going. I'll see you again sometime." El shook her head, deflated. The moment was gone and Mike unfortunately didn't have the time or courage to dwell. He just didn't have that kind of luck.

He climbed into the cab before the cab driver could take off and El gently passed him the cake. He handed her apron back in exchange, trying to ignore the warmth that seeped into his fingertips as they brushed against hers.

“Bye Mike.”

“Bye El.” Bitter disappointment knotted his stomach. He couldn’t shake the niggling feeling that he was missing something.

“Wish your sister a happy birthday for me.” El said, moving to shut the door.

“I’ll be sure to pass it on to Nancy. Thanks again El.” He barely registered the look of shock on her face as the door slammed shut—but it was too late.

The cab pulled smoothly away from the curb.

Mike craned his neck and looked back, but El already turned to head inside. She probably had to hurry and get ready for her date with Max.

Regret flared across his skin as he settled down into his seat. He distractedly told the driver that he needed to stop at the other dorm building briefly (to grab his suit) and then the address of the party venue, but he’d left his mind far away with a certain almost stranger. He sighed and glanced forlornly down at the cake box.

Mike’s eyes widened. There was a little doodle on the box, drawn beside the bakery’s stamped logo. He looked at it a little closer.

It was a four-leaf clover.

She’d drawn him a lucky charm.

His heart swelled in his chest and then deflated with a groan. He let his head drop back on the headrest. Mike realized that now was not the time to mope about his short-lived crush.

Nancy’s birthday party and engagement was in just a few hours and he really needed to get his head in the game.

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“What’s up Mike? You seem down tonight.” He jolted, looking up to see Will, one of his best friends, holding out a drink for him with a concerned look.

Lucas and Dustin were talking to several party guests just past the doorway of the bustling room. Will must have noticed him hiding in the corner and come to investigate.

“Sorry.” Mike said sheepishly, glancing around Will. “No Jordan tonight?” He asked. It was nine o’ clock and the party was in full swing. There must have been close to a hundred people crammed into the small art gallery.

Will shook his head. “He has to work until nine-thirty. But he should make it before... you know. Now. What’s up?” Will asked, brushing aside Mike’s lame attempt at changing the subject. Of course Will noticed him moping. He was a damn perceptive friend like that.

“I uh... met someone today.” Mike began awkwardly.

“You did?” Will said excitedly, looking at his friend before the excitement dropped from his features.

“Oh. What happened?”

Mike spilled it all. From the untimely death of the first cake to being saved by El, ending with the goodbye at the cab. What had El been going to ask him?

Will let him talk uninterrupted and thankfully no one else disturbed their conversation.

“I’m impressed you managed to pull a cake as pretty as that one,” Will jerked his thumb towards the dessert table, “in just an afternoon.” His soft blue eyes appeared thoughtful as he peered over at the cake. “I’m sorry it didn’t work out. But the good news is it seems your bad luck has finally met its match.” Upon Mike’s questioning look, he elaborated.

“Meeting someone like that was a pretty bold stroke of good luck. Especially for someone with bad luck as potent as yours,” Will teased,

“it was really nice of her to help you. I’d keep someone like that around as a friend for sure.”

Mike nodded in agreement. El could be an awesome addition to their friend group! Especially because she seemed keen to try Dungeons and Dragons again. But at the same time Mike knew it wasn't fair to pine after El while trying be friends, because good friends didn't creepily pine for the other when they had a significant other.

“Mike! Hey Mike! There you are. Can I borrow you for a sec?” Nancy called excitedly, speeding over to the two boys sitting on the bench. He looked up in surprise as she held out her hand for him to take.

Mike relented with a curious expression and Nancy nearly hauled his arm out of his socket pulling him up. He shot an amused looking Will an apologetic look before she dragged him away.

“Nancy, what’s going on?” He asked, trying to keep up with his sister in the crowd of party guests. Nancy beamed as they came to a halt beside the cake. She looked beautiful tonight, her face aglow in the excitement of the party, blue eyes sparkling.

“How did you know this was my favourite bakery?” She pointed to the cake. He looked at his sister and then down to the cake in confusion.

“What do you mean?” Mike asked dumbly.

“The logo on the box! The cake is from my favourite bakery.” Nancy looked over her shoulder secretively, “even Jonathan doesn’t know I go there. Then I’d have to share my cupcake I always get if I did.” She giggled.

Mike still didn’t understand, but luckily his sister continued.

“He said he sent you to a different bakery for a cake... I don’t want to know what happened to the original one but I just wanted to say thank you!” Nancy waved him off when Mike opened his mouth to apologize.

“Nance,” He interjected finally, “it wasn’t from the bakery. I’m sorry. My friend El made it after um... the first one didn’t make it.”

Nancy looked at him as though he'd sprouted wings and soared straight for the sun.

"El... Oh! You mean Jane! I forgot she uses her nickname a lot. I didn't know you knew her. I'm in their shop so often I became friends with both El and her sister Kali." Comprehension dawned over Nancy's features and she laughed, ruffling her brother's hair affectionately.

Mike was so *fucking lost*. He opened his mouth but nothing came out.

How did Nancy know El?

"What?" He finally managed to ask.

Nancy's brow furrowed and she looked at him a little more closely.

Was he missing something?

"El works at her sister's bakery sometimes," Nancy said slowly, "Kali's Bakeshop? Is this really not ringing a bell? We are talking about the same person right?" She glanced at someone over his shoulder and did a double take.

"Oh wait! There she is! See?" Nancy grabbed his shoulders and spun him around like a ragdoll, pointing him towards the doorway.

It took Mike a moment to regain his bearings. He peered towards the doorway of the art gallery.

His heart lodged in his throat.

It was El.

2. Lady Luck

El stood at the doorway of his sister's birthday/ soon to be engagement party.

El, who saved his sorry hide by helping him bake a cake for said party.

El, who was lovely and kind and had unintentionally stolen Mike Wheeler's heart almost immediately.

El, who was... Wait. Why was she here? Didn't she have a date with Max?

Elation, confusion, and nervousness crashed through him all at once.

There were too many unanswered questions and Mike's brain was currently floating miles above his body with no hopes of ever reconnecting. He nearly asked Nancy to pinch him, because this couldn't possibly be happening.

And yet... there she was, looking absolutely stunning in a long sleeved black top and an overall romper.

Mike couldn't stop staring like a complete goof.

He almost didn't notice the other person El entered with. The woman was taller, but they were no doubt together as they shared a laugh and hung their coats.

"Come on," Nancy was suddenly dragging him along again, "let's go say hi!" Mike could hardly process what was happening before his sister yanked him over to greet the two women.

El caught sight of Mike just before his sister tackled her.

"Cupcake Queen! Hi!" Nancy exclaimed happily, letting Mike's arm go and throwing her arms around the shorter girl. Apparently, Nancy had her own nickname for El too.

"Hey Nance!" El's voice was muffled, her face pressed into Nancy's

shoulder. "Thanks for inviting us! This is my plus one, Max." She stepped back, letting the birthday girl and Max greet one another.

Max.

Wait.

This was *Max*?

Holy shit, Mike thought with a groan, *I definitely never stood a chance! This must be El's girlfriend!*

"It's great to meet you Max!" Nancy said happily, giving her a friendly hug before turning her attention back to El.

"Mike told me you two met! You'll have to tell me how later. Max, this is my little brother, Mike." Nancy added excitedly. Mike shook Max's hand out of muscle memory alone.

Max was startlingly beautiful. She had striking red hair and piercing blue eyes that made him feel as though she could see right through him. It was almost as if her gaze said: *I know you were flirting with my girlfriend earlier today, wise guy.*

"Oh! I have more people arriving. I need to go say hello. El, your sister is in here somewhere." Nancy gestured vaguely to the full room before turning to her brother. "Why don't you show them where the refreshments are? I'll see you in a bit." And just like that, she vanished into the throng of party guests, leaving Mike alone with El and Max.

El's dark eyes flashed to Mike and he suddenly felt very embarrassed. She didn't seem surprised at all to see him!

"So..." he trailed off unsurely, "you uh... know my sister?" He coughed lamely; it was impressive he could even piece together a sentence right now.

El grinned. "Yeah, I met Nancy about eight months ago! She's great. She's always in the shop for a cupcake and a cup of coffee. We hit it off."

“Did you know the whole time?” Mike asked a little sulkily, unsure if she’d been playing a prank on him or not.

“No. Not until you said you’d wish Nancy a happy birthday for me! But by then the cab left.” El explained, smiling from ear to ear. “I didn’t think there could be so many Nancy’s in the same city celebrating their birthday on the same day. And then the rest just kind of clicked too.”

“Wow.” Mike groaned, “I can’t believe it. And you’re a baker! You said you just did it for a hobby!” He accused giddily. He couldn’t believe it! El was *here*!

“It is a hobby! I just help my sister Kali out at her bakeshop sometimes when she’s busy. I’m just a boring student most of the time. Today was my day off and I wanted to help Kali but she kicked me out and told me to go home.” El explained just as excitedly. In their exuberance they had grown louder and closer and Mike had the strangest urge to hug El, he was so happy to see her!

“Nancy loves the cake, it’s over here, it made it safe and sound this time!” Mike reached for El’s hand to lead her to the dessert table and that’s when he caught sight of Max’s blue eyes boring into him.

He stopped cold.

She wore a lazy smirk on her lips as she looked back and forth from El to Mike. Both of them blushed brightly and Mike immediately dropped his hand.

He’d completely forgotten about Max.

“S-sorry.” Mike mumbled, putting a little space between himself and El.

“I could show you the refreshments now if you’d like?” He offered politely.

El seemed puzzled by the shift in his tone, her brow furrowed, and the previous excitement faded from her features. She nodded anyways.

Mike turned and led them towards the refreshments.

Jonathan had really gone all out for Nancy's birthday. The food and drink tables were practically groaning under the weight of all the refreshments. El and Max eyed the tables appreciatively, El's eyes lingering on the gleaming cake. The corners of her lips twitched upwards and she opened her mouth to say something but was cut off by an unexpected source.

"Mike! It's nearly time. We need to get ready." Will said breathlessly, surprising all three of them. It took Mike a moment to realize what he was talking about.

"Oh. OH. I'm sorry, I have to help with something for a minute." He apologized.

"We'll catch you after." El said understandingly with a wink.

Mike nearly died right then and there, but before he could expire, Will (thankfully) dragged him away.

It was just about ten o'clock—almost time for Jonathan to pop the question! He and Will had to hurry up and get into position.

Mike was sorry and yet not sorry to leave El and Max.

El was stunning and it was hard not to stare at her like a complete dork—but Mike knew he had to get it together. For Pete's sake her girlfriend was right there! He was literally ogling a woman in front of her significant other.

Not cool, Wheeler. Mike sighed to himself.

"That's the signal." Will said excitedly, watching Jonathan scratch his nose with an overly exaggerated motion that made Nancy look at him funny. Mike nodded and quickly faded out the music and the room gradually hushed.

Dustin and Lucas reemerged from the crowd and beelined for the speakers to hang out with Will and Mike as Jonathan offered a birthday toast to Nancy.

The crowd offered cheers to Nancy on her 27th birthday, and then they watched as Jonathan lean close and whisper something into her ear. Nancy looked confused, but she followed Jonathan onto the small patio just outside.

This was a part of the plan. There was no way Jonathan wanted to say something as private as the words he was proposing to Nancy with in front of the crowd. So as everyone resumed the party, they kept a close watch on the door for the couple's reemergence. Barb (his sister's best friend and undoubtedly future maid of honor) loyally guarded the patio door, keeping anyone else from going outside as a very important conversation happened.

"So Mike, who were those girls you were talking to?" Lucas asked suddenly as the chatter picked up once more.

Mike was taken off guard by the question. He looked to his friend, but Lucas was looking over towards El and... Mike realized, specifically Max.

"Oh, that's El and Max they're—"

He was cut off by a loud squealing sound.

Everyone in the party halted and about a hundred heads swiveled as one to face the patio door, breaths held in anticipation. A moment later, a thoroughly kissed looking Jonathan Byers opened the door and stepped solemnly back into the venue, Nancy's hand clutched in his own.

For a moment no one said a word and Mike feared the worst—had Nancy said no? He'd been so certain she would say yes, she loved Jonathan with all of her heart.

Jonathan cleared his throat and then shouted: "SHE SAID YES!"

Cheers and wolf whistles erupted.

Will threw his arm around Mike's shoulder and squeezed him excitedly, "we're going to be official brothers now!"

"Yeah!" Mike agreed just as cheerfully.

“Ahem.” Dustin coughed, clearly feeling left out.

“Don’t worry Dustin, you can marry Mike and then you’ll be in the Wheeler family too.” Lucas teased. Dustin and Mike glanced each other over.

“Please. I could do so much better.” Dustin said, rolling his eyes.

Mike snorted and punched his friend playfully in the shoulder.

The four friends watched as the ecstatic crowd immediately mobbed Jonathan and Nancy and the party took on an even more festive atmosphere. Mike, Will, Dustin and Lucas hung back, letting others congratulate the newly engaged couple first. There would be plenty of opportunities to offer congrats later.

The room became even more boisterous; the mix of happy news, good food and alcohol filled the small art gallery with plenty of cheer.

Mike stayed with his friends for a little while, watching Dustin do a walrus impression with two sliced green peppers and snorted when Lucas laughed and his drink shot out of his nose.

Still, he found his gaze searching for a familiar head of soft curls and his stomach flipped every time he saw her. She was talking with an olive-skinned girl with long, lustrous dark hair at one point and judging by how friendly the two were, Mike had to guess that this was El’s sister Kali.

Will perked up when his boyfriend arrived, and when they disappeared to go get some drinks Mike decided to take a small breather out on the patio. It was loud and hot in the art gallery now and he just needed some fresh air.

He slipped out into the cool night air, the voices became muffled as he shut the door behind him and let out a deep sigh. There were only a few people on the patio taking a quick smoke break and Mike said a brief hello before sitting down at one of the two small tables. Soon enough he had the patio to himself when they disappeared back inside, and he was left alone.

Even the patio was decorated beautifully.

Light strands crisscrossed across the rafters, illuminating the patio in an ethereal, romantic glow. A vase of beautiful, pink peonies was on the two small bistro style tables with heart shaped confetti strewn on the surface.

It was a beautiful night and Mike was incredibly happy for his sister. Jonathan had made her so happy over the years and it was plain to see that they loved each other deeply. His soon to be brother in law had really thought of everything and Mike was glad that Nancy found someone so kind hearted and thoughtful to spend the rest of her life with.

He couldn't help but wonder if he would be so lucky too.

Whiskey brown eyes and a slightly crooked smile flitted through his thoughts and Mike immediately squashed them down.

He was so lost in his thoughts that he didn't hear the patio door open, nor did he notice the person sit beside him until they spoke.

"So, Mike. Who's your friend? The one who snorted his drink out of his nose?" Mike jumped when he noticed Max, who gave him a smirk and she leaned back in her chair nonchalantly.

"What?" He asked dumbly.

Max gave him an unimpressed stare.

"Who's your friend?" She repeated impatiently. Mike stared at her uncomprehendingly. Why was she asking about Lucas?

"Lucas?" Mike said unsurely. "What do you want from him?" He asked.

"Is he single?" Max pressed, ignoring his question.

Mike stared again. What was with today and feeling totally, completely, *fucking lost*?

He nodded anyways.

“Great.” Max said happily, her blue eyes flashing. “I wanted to make sure before I asked for his number.” She let out a breath and glanced around the patio appreciatively, admiring the décor.

Mike, meanwhile, stared at Max in complete and utter bewilderment. Why was she asking about whether or not another person was available to date when she was here with El... unless....

“Aren’t you El’s girlfriend?” He blurted inelegantly.

“What?” Max’s head whipped towards him in surprise, eyes wide.

“You and El. I thought you were dating?” Mike asked, growing increasingly confused at Max’s reaction.

There was a beat of silence that seemed inescapably long.

Mike staring at Max. Max staring at Mike.

“Me and...” She trailed off, a look of comprehension passed through her gaze and she burst out laughing.

“That’s why!” Max laughed, “that’s why you were acting so weird—you thought El was my girlfriend?”

Mike flushed.

“I heard her talking to you on the phone and I just assumed...” He stammered, his heart racing in both mortification and hope.

“That’s just how we talk to each other,” Max rolled her eyes. “El is my girl *friend*, but not my *girlfriend*. Get it?” She stressed the words carefully, watching as understanding finally began to seep into him.

“I—” Mike opened and closed his mouth, his teeth clattered together at the abruptness of his movement. From the moment El picked up the phone he’d just assumed that Max was her boyfriend. Because she was amazing and wonderful and so cool! It wouldn’t be a surprise. But what Mike should have accounted for was that El leaned towards him too. And then when El tried to take the time at the cab to ask him a question... He didn’t have the courage or luck to believe that what he thought El was going to ask him could be true.

"I get it." Mike groaned loudly, dropping his head into his hands. "How bad did I mess this up?" He asked, peering over at Max.

"Well, you probably should have let El ask you out at the cab." Max mused, "but I think you just confused her. I understand why you were so hot and cold now though."

He groaned again and slumped down in his chair. Max let him squirm a little as she hummed and hawed over what to do now.

"Honestly? I don't think it's that bad. You just have to talk to El. She'll understand." Max relented and gave him a small, encouraging smile. "She couldn't stop gushing about how cute you were and something about nerdy hobbies... blah, blah, blah." She waved her hand dismissively as Mike flushed in both happiness and embarrassment.

El had gushed... about *him*?

He tried to ignore the pleased, embarrassed warmth that welled in his chest at the thought. El *had* been going to ask him out at the cab. She must like him too! In between trying to calm his erratically beating heart and not grin like a lunatic, Mike was completely taken off guard for what happened next.

"Whatever you do," Max drawled, trying not to think about how disgustingly cute these two nerds would be if they did start dating, "you'd better decide quickly. Here she comes."

Mike nearly jumped out of his skin because sure enough, El opened the door to the patio and caught sight of the two of them.

"Oh! There you are Max. With Mike?" His entire body flushed. Knowing that El quite possibly maybe liked him too... was his heart going to explode out of his chest? Hopefully there was someone with first aid training onsite because the way his heart hammered in his chest, it was a *real* possibility.

"El. Perfect timing. Mike here just confirmed that his friend is single. I'm going to talk to him and hopefully get his number." Max stood abruptly, before walking to her friend, grasping El around the

shoulders and leading her over to the small patio table.

El looked suitably startled when Max plonked her down in the now-empty seat across from Mike.

“Mike was just telling me something *very* interesting and I’m sure he’d love to share the story with you too. Wish me luck!” Max patted El fondly on top of the head while simultaneously shooting him a pointed look before she disappeared back inside.

Click!

Mike winced at the sound of the patio door locking. Max wasn’t exactly subtle. But perhaps he couldn’t afford to be subtle either.

“Did she just... lock us out?” El asked incredulously, brow furrowing.

“She did.” Mike sighed.

He was suddenly very glad for the dim, romantic lighting on the patio because he was certain his face was stained permanently pink. El shook her head at her friend’s antics and settled down into her seat, peering around in a dazed wonder at the décor.

“Beautiful.” She breathed contently, the lights reflecting in her gaze and Mike was fairly certain his whole heart might already belong to this almost stranger.

“Yeah.” He sighed without taking his eyes off of El. She turned to him, expecting to see Mike admiring the décor too, but was startled to see that he was only staring at her.

Mike Wheeler realized he’d been granted an *amazing* stroke of luck here—and it was one he couldn’t let slip away again. Sometimes you had to make your own luck.

Her cheeks darkened, and Mike knew it was now or never.

“I thought Max was your girlfriend.” He blurted.

El’s eyes widened.

“What?”

“The phone call. I was trying not to eavesdrop, but I thought you were dating Max because of the way you ended the call.” Mike rambled, “and it made sense that someone as awesome as you would already be dating someone. So I just assumed and um... I shouldn’t have.” He finished lamely, falling quiet.

He was too nervous to look at El and she was quiet for a moment before a chuckle slipped through her lips.

He looked to her and was flattered to see that her cheeks were stained pink too.

“You thought I was dating Max...” She trailed off, grinning. “That’s why you were so strange after!” El exclaimed, the giggles spilling from her lips before she could stop them.

“I thought I’d made you uncomfortable earlier. I was going to apologize.” She admitted, laughing still. Mike couldn’t help but join in a little nervously at first.

“I thought *I* was making you uncomfortable too! I thought you had a boyfriend and I almost kissed you!” Suddenly the whole situation seemed so *silly*.

El clutched her stomach as they both laughed long and loud. Luckily they were out here all alone; otherwise people would have thought they were loons. Eventually their laughter died out and they sat there, in a comfortable silence, listening to the din of the party inside.

“Well, now you know I don’t have a boyfriend or girlfriend. And I assume you’re not seeing anyone either...” At El’s questioning look Mike shook his head vehemently. Her dark gaze danced with mirth and *something*, she nervously wet her lips.

“Does that mean I can kiss you now?”

It was a simple question and yet it stole his breath away. Somehow Mike knew he’d have to get used to being so affected by El.

Mike swallowed heavily, lost under the depth of her dark gaze.

He nodded.

She leaned forwards slowly, with plenty of time for him to pull away if he wanted.

He didn't.

The kiss was soft and sweet with just a touch of hesitation at first.

El's lips pressed against his tentatively and Mike melted. His breath hitched and suddenly her arms were wrapped around his neck and the kiss began to burn. It simmered under his eyelids, under his skin, digging down into his lungs and burning into his heart. His hands buried into those soft curls he'd been dying to touch all day and El sighed against his lips. He kissed her sweetly on the corners of her mouth, pulling back with great reluctance when he could feel her smiling against him.

El was glowing when they parted, though they did not move away from one another.

"I've been wanting to do that since you suggested a Dungeons and Dragons board game night." Mike admitted, trying to let his brain catch up with his body.

How could she affect him so much? It wasn't fair.

"I know this is a little late now, but I was wondering if you wanted to go out with me sometime?" El asked breathlessly, her eyes flickering down to his lips once more.

"Hell yes." Mike blurted.

El laughed and he groaned in embarrassment.

"Points for enthusiasm." She murmured, leaning in to steal another kiss.

The loud, undeniable sound of a throat clearing interrupted their second kiss. Mike and El bonked heads as they jumped apart in

surprise.

A newly engaged Nancy and Jonathan stood by the doors of the patio, not even trying to hide their knowing smirks.

“Well, had I known you two would have gotten along *this* well, I would have introduced you two to each other myself!” Nancy teased.

Mike blushed brightly, but he was glad to see that El’s cheeks were just as flushed but she was still smiling.

“Congratulations you two.” El kissed Nancy and then Jonathan’s cheeks happily.

“Yeah, congratulations guys.” Mike hopped up, happy for the distraction of being caught kissing by his *sister* of all people. At least it hadn’t been Lucas or Dustin. He’d never hear the end of it.

He hugged his sister, who very well might have been trying to squeeze the life right out of him with how hard she hugged him back. Jonathan gave Mike a firm hug, keeping a tight grip on his shoulders before asking:

“So what happened to the first cake?”

...

Nancy and Jonathan were married eight months later and it was beautiful.

Karen Wheeler was a crying, happy, sappy wreck all day, closely followed by Joyce Byers. Seeing their babies all grown up and married—it was a joyous occasion for both sides of the families.

Will was Jonathan’s best man of course, and Barb was Nancy’s maid of honor with their younger sister Holly as her bridesmaid.

El was kind enough to agree to go to Nancy’s wedding with Mike as his now *girlfriend*. (Mike still could hardly believe his luck that El wanted to date a nerd like him).

Lucas, who had been in a dazed, love struck stupor since the night of

Nancy's birthday party, was accompanied his girlfriend: Max. They'd hit it off after that night and had started dating shortly after.

Will ended up catching the bouquet by complete accident.

Nancy hadn't even meant to throw it! She'd gotten a little too into a conversation and it flew from her hand when she gestured, soaring over to the table and caught by a startled Will.

Dustin nearly killed himself laughing and almost killed himself laughing again when not two years later, Will was the next one to be married to his partner Jordan.

...

Five years later...

Mike Wheeler never counted himself a lucky person until the day he met El.

And here they were—holding each other close on the dance floor as husband and wife.

He'd never get tired of the feel of El against him. In the five years they had been together, she never stopped affecting him so deeply. She was so sincere, so kind, so beautiful of a person that Mike Wheeler long realized he'd been doomed to fall in love from the day they met.

At the end of their first dance Mike pressed a soft kiss to El's lips.

"I love you." He sighed happily.

"I love you too." El stole one more kiss and their friends and family clapped (or in Max, Dustin and Lucas's cases, wolf whistled). As they parted, Mike chuckled under his breath, earning a curious look from El.

"What is it?" She asked with that slightly crooked smile that did funny things to his insides.

"I was just thinking that I found my good luck charm after all." He whispered into her ear. Her face lit up and she gave his hand a tight squeeze.

Their wedding went perfectly...

Right up until the moment Mike tripped and face planted into the wedding cake.

(And then, it was perfect still.)

...

BONUS SCENE: The Phone Call from El's Perspective

"Oh hey Max!" El greeted happily, tucking the phone under her chin and reaching for the cookbook at the same time.

"You sound way too chipper," Max remarked incredulously. "What are you doing right now?" El giggled.

"I'm just baking a cake with Mike." She explained.

There was a beat of silence.

"Is that code for you're having sex? Who the hell is Mike?" Max exclaimed excitedly. El blushed violently, nearly dropping her phone in surprise.

"Max!" El hissed into the phone. Her friend laughed on the other end of the line. El glanced up worriedly; paranoid that Mike had somehow heard Max. Luckily he seemed far too engrossed in searching for the icing sugar to notice.

"Sorry! Sorry." Max laughed, not sounding the least bit sorry. "But seriously, baking with a dude? That's like... third base for you." El's cheeks darkened further and she wondered why her best friend was such a shit disturber.

"I bake with you all the time?" El asked, thinking to all those afternoons together.

“Correction—you bake while I lay on the couch and complain until it’s ready and then I stuff my face. And wait a second. Who the hell is Mike anyways? You’ve never mentioned him before! What if he’s a serial killer?”

“Oh...” El trailed off for a moment. “I never thought to ask. Hold on.” She covered the receiver and looked at Mike over her shoulder.

“Mike?” She called tentatively.

He turned around, a look of curiosity passing over his face and El’s stomach swooped deliciously. He had a smear of butter on his cheek.

Cute. El tried to refocus on the question at hand.

“Yeah?”

“You’re not a serial killer, are you?”

A sound that was a garbled mix between a snort and a laugh erupted from Mike. She couldn’t help but grin in response and did a damn poor job of hiding it when his dark gaze flitted to her lips. Somehow that innocent action made her face grow hot.

“No. Are you?” He finally managed to ask. It was a fair question to receive in return.

“No.” El nodded approvingly before uncovering the mouthpiece on the phone once more.

“Well I’m glad we got that settled.” Max drawled, unimpressed. She was silent for a moment before asking:

“So El, is Mike cute?”

El nearly choked on her own saliva.

Dammit Max, yes he is, she swore mentally. From the moment El had stopped on the sidewalk at the scene of the first cake’s death and Mike had turned around to face her... Cupid may as well have shot an arrow straight through her heart.

She recognized him from class, but he always looked like a zombie in their 8AM class and she'd been distracted, taking note of his entrance but never really paying attention beyond that. Mostly she noticed him because in his sleepy, zombie-like state, his fluffy hair was always askew.

And now... he was in her kitchen and his name was Mike and she was helping him bake a cake for his sister's birthday of all things. This wasn't how she'd anticipated her Saturday to go, but El was glad she'd met him.

Of course she couldn't say any of this right now.

"I'll call you later Max, we have to get this done in a jiff." El inelegantly ended their conversation. Her refusal to answer Max's question would only provide more fodder for later teasing, even though Max was just being a brat because she *knew* Mike was in the kitchen with her.

"Sounds good El. We still on for tonight?" She could hear the grin in Max's voice.

"Of course you're my date. I'll pick you up at seven. Love you." El smiled and hung up the phone.

"I'm sorry," El said apologetically and turned back to Mike, "now where were we?"

Notes for the Chapter:

I'm a sucker for a happy ending :')

Thank you so much for reading and I hope you enjoyed!

I have another story in the works currently, it will loosely follow the storyline of 'Knight and Day' (that Tom Cruise and Cameron Diaz movie) and be a Modern Day / POWERS AU. It will likely be around twelve to fifteen chapters.